

Testimony before the
Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census
Committee on Government Reform
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Chairman Turner and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Joseph Koncelik, director of Ohio EPA, about the brownfield redevelopment needs of Ohio communities. In both our large urban areas and small towns, brownfields exist and create not only blight, but environmental and safety hazards. These brownfields are also a reminder of jobs lost and opportunities missed.

Ohio has operated a successful brownfields cleanup program, known as the Voluntary Action Program, since 1994 when the legislation for the program was signed by Senator (then Governor) Voinovich. The program allows for licensed environmental professionals to privately cleanup Ohio brownfields, using state-of-the-art technical requirements adopted by Ohio EPA. Once the properties are cleaned up appropriately, Ohio EPA reviews the cleanup documentation and issues a release from state civil liability for the cleanup. To date, over 200 properties have been cleaned up under the Voluntary Action Program and technical assistance for cleanup has been provided by Ohio EPA to assist over 300 more brownfield owners and volunteers. In return, approximately 7000 new Ohio part-time and full-time jobs have been created at these redeveloped sites.

Ohio is also operating an extremely successful brownfield cleanup grant program, known as the Clean Ohio Fund. The Clean Ohio Fund was established in November 2000 when Ohio voters passed Issue 1. The Clean Ohio Fund provides cleanup and assessment grants, up to \$3 million per site, to municipalities for brownfields they own or hold interest in. To date, the Clean Ohio Fund has provided over \$15 million in assistance funding and over \$200 million in revitalization funding to 88 sites across Ohio. In return, the Clean Ohio Fund has seen \$930 million in investment in these properties and the creation of 6700 new jobs.

U.S. EPA also offers many very attractive brownfield cleanup incentives with funding made available through the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act that President Bush signed on January 11, 2002. As result of this Act, 29 cities and towns in Ohio have received grant funding for investigation and cleanup of brownfield sites that have blighted their communities. This funding has been a tremendous help toward revitalizing these communities= urban cores and has resulted in job creation and retention.

Despite all the innovative financial incentive programs and technical assistance available to make brownfield cleanup easier, there still remain obstacles to the redevelopment of many former commercial and industrial sites. Encouraging private developers to take on brownfield redevelopment projects at sites with large amounts of contamination or where complex cleanup is needed are a few of those obstacles. Most government brownfield incentives are available only to local governments or other

public entities. Providing a tax credit that would encourage the private sector to increase their brownfields redevelopment work, as you have proposed Chairman Turner, would provide a tremendous boost to Ohio's urban core and small town revitalization efforts.

Chairman Turner and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to testify at this hearing today. On behalf of Director Koncelik and the many communities in Ohio that are dealing with the challenges of brownfield redevelopment, your interest is much appreciated.